

A short history of the Club and its Bulletin

by the Hon. Secretary, R. E. F. Peal

THE CLUB

After the Annual General Meeting of the British Ornithologists' Union held on 18 May 1892 had concluded its business, a proposition was made that an Ornithological Club should be formed to hold monthly meetings at which papers should be read and specimens exhibited. A committee of the Earl of Gainsborough, Henry Seebohm, Howard Saunders, E. Bidwell and Dr. R. Bowdler Sharpe was appointed to consider the advisability of carrying out the proposed scheme. The committee probably never met but its members discussed informally the proposals, which were entirely the concept of Bowdler Sharpe (Senior Assistant in charge of the bird Collection of the Natural History Museum), and they supported them. On 5 October 1892, 15 B.O.U. Members and 4 guests met at the Mona Hotel in Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, Dr. P. L. Sclater, F.R.S. being placed in the Chair, for the Inaugural Meeting of the British Ornithologists' Club. At this Meeting the Rules of the Club were proposed and adopted. It was to consist of members of the Union, who could become Members of the Club by signifying the wish to do so and paying the subscription of 5s. an annual session. Meetings were to be held on the third Wednesday in every month from October to June and at them papers upon ornithological subjects were to be read, specimens exhibited and discussion invited. An abstract of the proceedings should be printed as soon as possible after each Meeting, under the title "Bulletin of the British Ornithologists' Club" to be distributed gratis to every Member and sold at a price of 1s. each by the publisher, Mr. R. H. Porter. Affairs were to be managed by a Committee of 3 Members (to be elected annually, one to be changed each year) together with the Editor of the *Ibis* (Dr. P. L. Sclater), the Editor of the *Bulletin* and the Secretary and Treasurer *ex-officio*. Bowdler Sharpe was appointed Editor and Howard Saunders Secretary and Treasurer. The Meeting continued with Edward Degen reading a paper "On some of the main features in the evolution of the bird's wing", illustrated by diagrams and specimens and followed by a discussion. The time of the Meeting is not stated but it was no lightweight start to the Club as Degen's paper was printed, after editing by W. P. Pycraft in the absence of the author in Australia, as Vol. II of the "Bulletin", there occupying 28 pages.

The next Meeting, held a fortnight later at the same place, was described as "The first regular meeting of the Club" and it is from that one that subsequent Meetings have been numbered: by then there were 60 Members. Of the 4 new species from the Borneo area described there by Bowdler Sharpe, in the Club's first taxonomic business, only one has been reduced in Peters to a sub-species.

Meetings were held monthly from October to June (apart from sessions 1940-45) until 1955, when a Meeting in September replaced the June one. In 1967 and in 1968 Meetings were reduced to 8 by the elimination of the May Meeting and since then Meetings have normally been held in alternate months. The third Wednesday in the month was changed to the second in December 1910, back to the third in October 1945 to suit the hotel and to

the third Tuesday in May 1953, although there is now more flexibility in dates than previously.

P. L. Sclater was Chairman at every Meeting except one which he attended and he was elected almost annually from 1896 until his death in 1913. However, up to 1912 it was *ex officio* as *Ibis* editor that he sat on the Committee and the first provision in the Rules for a Chairman was in August 1913. Then a change in the Rules provided for a Chairman to be elected for a 5 year term and then ineligible for immediate re-election (though in fact W. L. Sclater, elected in 1918 for 5 years, served 6), and in 1924 the term was reduced to 3 years. Vice-Chairmen can be traced in most years from 1896 to 1922, always persons serving on the Committee in another capacity, occasionally one but usually two. The first authority for them in the Rules was in 1930, when one was to be elected annually for one year and then ineligible for immediate re-election. In 1938 the number was raised to 2 and in 1949 it became one again and the term increased to 3 years. In 1919 the *Ibis* editor or joint editors ceased to serve on the Club committee and the election of the *Bulletin* editor was for a 5 year term with a ban on immediate re-election, which in 1957 was expressly waived in the case of Dr. J. G. Harrison and has since been removed. The offices of Secretary and Treasurer were separated in 1935.

The Committee Minute Books from October 1904 are still held. The first, which lasted until June 1915, was a pocket-sized limp-covered notebook costing 2d. in which 79 pages were used. The Treasurer's book 1902-1915 (cost 1s. 3d.) is held, as are manuscript accounts for the years 1919-1921, and from 1923/24 the Annual Accounts have been published in the *Bulletin* (except for 1968-1971, when they were printed but not included in the *Bulletin*).

The original Rules did not state who should authorize changes in the Rules and elect the officers and members of the Committee and up to 1900 these functions were performed at Club meetings by the Members. However by 1904 the Committee had assumed these powers and so continued until they decided in November 1915 that General Meetings of Members should be called to exercise them and that also a Balance Sheet and Report should be presented annually to a General Meeting. The General Meetings in 1916, 1917 and 1918 were described as the First, Second and Third Annual General Meetings though when the custom of numbering them was recommenced in 1951 they were numbered from the beginning of the Club. At General Meetings in January and February 1950 the Rules were altered to permit Associate Members, to which representatives of the B.O.U. had agreed. These had to be introduced by two Club Members and elected by the Committee; conditions were otherwise the same as for Members, except that they were not allowed to vote, serve on the Committee or receive the *Bulletin* gratis.

By the closing Meeting of the first session, in June 1893, 85 of the 200 B.O.U. members resident in the U.K., including nearly all the working members, had joined the Club and paid their subscriptions, among them 7 Fellows of the Royal Society. At the same Meeting W. R. Ogilvie Grant recounted a successful expedition to Banffshire to obtain the nest of the Snow Bunting and the Dotterel, which were shortly to be exhibited in the British Museum. Mr. F. D. Godman had indicated to him so well their probable

breeding places that he had obtained the nests on the first day of his expedition.

The second session had its share of nomenclature with 8 new genera and 46 new forms; membership rose to 102 and an entrance fee of 5s. was added to the Rules, from which it was raised to £1 in 1906. At the opening Meeting the Chairman, Dr. P. L. Sclater, gave an Address reported *verbatim* and this practice was followed almost every year up to 1941. The subjects usually covered were expeditions, other current ornithological work and new publications, but other topics were often included. Thus in 1894 Dr. Sclater suggested that ornithologists seeking places to explore should try the interior of Asiatic Turkey, particularly the Upper Euphrates, in the Palearctic and, for a winter in the West Indies, Margarita, an island off Venezuela "a healthy place, easy of access and well provided with birds". A more adventurous explorer who did not fear Africa, might visit "the Upper Senegal River and the elevated land between that and the Upper Niger River, over which the *pax Gallica* is now said to prevail". A year later he proposed Tripoli and Arabia Felix as shorter excursions which might be accomplished in a winter's travel. In 1898 he mentioned that the newly completed Catalogue of Birds in the British Museum, listing all known species, had 11,614 species, 2,255 genera and 124 families, since when there has been an appreciable sinking or lumping of species, perhaps of genera, and an increase in families. In 1901 he had been to Turkey and "The Turkish Government, as was well known, did not recognise Science of any kind and there was nothing in the shape of a museum at Constantinople except a collection of antiquities". Then in 1903 he hoped a B.O.U. Member might explore scientifically "Upper Nigeria and those shores of Lake Tsad lately come under British sway hardly yet touched on by the ornithologist". Four years later he told of W. Goodfellow having collected in Formosa the Mikado Pheasant, of remarkable interest "although, as yet, we have only caught its tail" and of the adventurous journey from Lake Chad to the Upper Nile of Boyd Alexander.

In June 1894, under a change in the Rules, no B.O.U. Member might attend a meeting as a Visitor unless his usual residence were outside the U.K. Also a Club Member introducing a guest had to pay 1s. to the Treasurer, and the *Bulletin* was to be sent gratis only to Members who had paid their subscriptions. By 1896 the 1s. charge was in abeyance, thanks to the prosperous condition of the Club, and in April 1898 it was abolished for all except B.O.U. members, whom Members were then permitted to bring as guests, the 1s. being paid whether the visiting B.O.U. member came to dinner or to the meeting after. In fact B.O.U. members seem to have been rare Visitors, because in the period 1902-1915 the accounts show 1s. paid for a Visitor only once.

In the 19th century, Meetings were largely occupied with exhibition of skins, descriptions of new forms and taxonomic discussion but by the 20th some changes were beginning. In January 1900 the Meeting was mostly devoted to lantern slides of 9 Members and friends, including Cherry Kearton. After this, lantern evenings, held annually, were very popular Meetings. In March 1905, however, too much was attempted: after 4 new South American species had been described and 2 other Members had exhibited specimens, slides of W. Eagle Clarke, Dr. E. A. Wilson and 9 others were shown, so

that there was no time for R. B. Lodge, who had been specially invited as a guest of the Club, to exhibit some of his slides, it being 11.30 p.m. In 1911, slides in natural colours taken on Lumière autochrome plates by Dr. F. G. Penrose earned high praise; exposures were generally 3-6 seconds, and two were of the Kingfisher.

In April 1900, the B.O.U. Annual Meeting having been fixed by mistake for the day of the Club's May Meeting, the two committees arranged that the usual annual dinner of the B.O.U. should not be held but that those B.O.U. members not Club Members would be invited to the dinner of the B.O.C. at 7 p.m. that day as Honorary Members and to attend the Club Meeting at 8.30 p.m. This set a precedent for joint dinners followed by Club Meetings to which all B.O.U. members were invited.

Collingwood Ingram, now senior Member of the Club and in his 100th year, is first mentioned in December 1901, when a specimen sent by him of a Scops Owl, caught alive in Broadstairs in 1898, was exhibited.

In February 1903 a letter was received from the Rev. F. C. R. Jourdain, describing the critical condition of Kites in Wales. A Kite Committee of 6 was appointed to preserve the Kite in Wales and £47 was subscribed in the room to enable it to prosecute its object. At least once more the hat was passed around at a Meeting and the final report, made in 1918 by E. G. B. Meade-Waldo, Secretary of the Kite Fund since 1905, stated that numbers had been down to 4 or 5 adults in 1905, but had then slowly increased.

It was in October 1904 that Dr. F. G. Penrose suggested collecting further data on bird migration in the U.K. and in December a (sub-)committee of 6 was appointed. A month later its proposals were adopted. These included arranging for as many as possible reliable observers in England and Wales to complete special schedules, to be sent in weekly, for 30 migratory species nesting fairly commonly in these countries (which included the Wryneck, now probably extinct as a regular breeder here): also for lighthouse and lightship keepers to complete schedules and send in wings and legs of killed birds. Thus began a massive study. The report for 1905, covering observations from mid-March to 4 June, with over 15,000 records and 350 wings received, was published in February 1906 as a special Volume of the *Bulletin* of 127 pages. The number of species covered rose to 35, and in 1906 work began also on autumn migration, the results being published with those of the subsequent spring. Reports included species accounts, and, in diary form, species freshly arrived and the weather within 40°N — 60°N and 10°E — 10°W. Reports increased in size to a maximum of 347 pages a Volume and sold at 6s. each, the Committee receiving from the Club a series of grants totalling £95 but otherwise being not only financially self-supporting but paying a surplus of £40 to the Club Treasurer in 1934. The plan was to publish a Volume summarizing the work, in which conclusions could be drawn, after the 10th Report. Unhappily the ninth Report for spring 1913 and autumn 1912 was the last because of the outbreak of war and no survey of these Reports has ever been made. Penrose and N. F. Ticehurst served on the Committee throughout and J. L. Bonhote, C. B. Ticehurst and C. B. Rickett for most of the years.

Another venture was the collection of migrants in China. In October 1910 it was agreed to advance J. D. La Touche, a Member living at Chin Kiang, up to £25 (or more if essential) for a spring migration expedition, the results

to be first published in the *Bulletin* and the collection to be the property of the Club Committee, La Touche to have first refusal of duplicates at cost price. He went to Shawsishan, a rocky islet with a lighthouse 30 miles E. of the Yangtze kiang, collected 428 skins of 136 species and had a 37 page report in the *Bulletin*. The British Museum paid £20 for 200 skins and Rothschild was offered the rest, receipts totalling £44 16s. La Touche was then sent £17 10s. plus £15 from the British Museum for the expenses of another similar expedition, which I have not traced, but in October 1914 the Club received a further £21 14s. "from the La Touche duplicate sale".

In 1913 a Club visit to Selbourne was arranged, including a visit to the garden of the "Wakes", lunch, a short paper to be read, a drive round Woolmer Forest and tea, in connection with the Club's 21st Anniversary. Also in this connection a silver Ibis on a globe and an album of the Members' signatures were presented at the Meeting on 11 June to W. L. Sclater acting on behalf of his father P. L. Sclater, who was unable to attend owing to injuries in a carriage accident, from which he died 16 days later. In April 1919 W. L. Sclater suggested a Club visit to Selbourne on 12 July, the visit planned for exactly 6 years earlier having been cancelled on the death, just before, of P. L. Sclater, but there is no evidence that the 1919 visit took place either.

Ladies could not originally join the Club because the B.O.U. did not admit them as members and there was an unwritten law against their introduction as Visitors. In March 1909 Members voted almost unanimously in favour of ladies being admitted to the lantern-slide exhibition after dinner the next month but the Committee rejected this proposal, as the room booked was too small. A year later a proposal that ladies be admitted as guests on the lantern evening was rejected by the Committee who changed the Rules, restricting Club Membership to *ordinary* members of the B.O.U., thereby keeping out the Hon. Lady Members newly created by the B.O.U. However at the Meeting on 15 March 1911 Miss E. L. Turner is shown as a Visitor — one hopes she was allowed at the dinner first but that is not stated. She showed 34 slides and her presence must have been arranged well in advance; she came again in March 1912 and ladies were to be allowed to come on the Selbourne visit in 1913. In 1916 at the B.O.U. A.G.M. in March a resolution was carried "That ladies be admitted to Ordinary Membership of the B.O.U.". However the Club in October that year passed changes to the Rules about restricting Club membership to ordinary *male* members of the B.O.U. but allowing lady B.O.U. members to attend the annual combined dinner (yet the reprinted Rules did not incorporate any such changes). Then in 1921 the Committee proposed to the A.G.M. that the Rules should restrict membership to ordinary *gentlemen* members of the B.O.U.; however, the A.G.M. voted 15 — 3 with many abstentions that all members of the B.O.U. be eligible for Club membership but, perversely, ladies were not to be admitted as guests and it was not until 1928 that this anomaly was removed.

In 1914/15, on the proposal of Dr. D. A. Bannerman, it was decided to hold discussions on subjects of general ornithological interest at not more than 3 Meetings a year, the two that year being on "Coloration as a Factor in Family and Generic Differentiation" and "The effect of Environment on the Evolution of Species", opened by P. R. Lowe and Lord Rothschild

respectively, and printed *verbatim* in the *Bulletin*. At the 1918 A.G.M., Jourdain, newly elected to the Committee, asked for more fresh blood on the Committee, and a gradual move away from taxonomy as the almost exclusive interest of the Club ensued. By 1928 the Committee discussed making Meetings more interesting with more invited speakers.

The only menu of any age preserved in the records is of the dinner, held jointly with the B.O.U., in March 1939, and reproduced on our cover, which shows the ability of Members and guests to enjoy a substantial evening of ornithology.

Financial problems did not worry the Club up to 1914. No figures are available before 1902, when a credit balance of £30 was brought forward and from then to 1914 the Club was able to keep more or less level overall. Membership rose gradually to just over 200 and likewise annual attendances at Meetings, with a peak of 468 in 1911/12. By 1917-18 attendances were down to 224 then rose gently for a decade and kept steady until 1939, with a peak of 605 in 1934/35 (193 of them at the Meeting following the joint dinner with the B.O.U.). The subscription was raised to 7s. 6d. a year in 1915 because of the Migration Committee activities, larger *Bulletins* owing to the *verbatim* reports of discussions and because it was hoped to publish a new General Index to the *Bulletin*. The production of the Index to Vols. XVI—XXXIX (1906-1919) strained the finances however, with liabilities thought to be greater than assets, so the subscription was raised to one guinea a year in 1921. This proved more than sufficient to pay off debts and there followed a period of over 25 years of generally rising surplus in the accounts, of making donations and the production of another General Index to the *Bulletin*. In 1922 the Club voted £12 10s. (and the B.O.U. £10) to enable the Aves section of the Zoological Record to be completed, in 1931 the Club gave £22 10s. (the B.O.U. had ceased to pay), and continued to donate every year except one up to 1970. Sums were given to the B.T.O. in 1933 and 1934, in 1937 towards the expenses of David Lack in visiting the Galapagos Islands, towards Kite Protection in Wales in 1938, and the 8th I.O.C. was given £100 in 1934 plus £50 in 1939 for printing the Proceedings. From 1920-1939 the Membership remained in the range 160-190.

During 1940-45 Meetings were reduced to a maximum of 5 a year and most had to be held in the afternoon, after a lunch except during part of 1941/2 when public luncheons were banned.

In 1943, the Hon. Secretary, N. B. Kinnear, was elected President of the B.O.U. and his office assumed by the Editor. This continued for the next 4 years. Membership only fell to 123 in the War years, but the attendance figure, at 109, was the lowest ever in 1942/43, and the Committee met just 4 times between September 1939 and May 1945. Membership grew gently up to 257 in 1961, after which there is a gap until 1972, when there were about 225, from which it has risen to the present 309. Attendances recovered immediately the war ended in 1945 and the highest thereafter was 600 in 1952 (including 222 at 2 meetings held jointly with the B.O.U.). Attendances fell gradually to 128 in 1969, since when they have risen again, with 243 last year.

In 1950 printing costs per page had doubled in 2 years, strict economies were made and the Club was recognised by the tax authorities as a charitable body. For 1963, by which time printing costs had started more or less annual

increases, the subscription was increased to £1 10s. Since then it has been a matter of ever-increasing printing costs pushing up subscription rates, though a somewhat rising circulation has slightly cushioned the latter. In 1961 Members with 50 years unbroken membership of the Club became entitled to life membership free of subscription and there are now 6 of these.

In 1959 and 1960 sub-committees of the Club and the B.O.U. discussed their meetings, as the B.O.U. was considering holding its A.G.M.s outside London. At the Union's request, it was decided in September 1960 that no more Associate Members would be elected, the entrance fee be abolished and that B.O.U. members be allowed to come to one Club meeting a year free of charge; on their part the B.O.U., who had in mind only one meeting a year in London, were considering giving the Club help over secretarial work, publicity and encouragement to join the Club.

The Club was bequeathed £1,000 by F. J. F. Barrington in 1956 and his house at Tring in trust by Herbert Stevens in 1964, benefactions which are of very great value to the Club. In 1969 Mrs. B. P. Hall earned the thanks of the Club by presenting funds for purchase of an excellent portable projector. In April 1951 Col. R. Meinertzhagen (connected with the Club since 1901 and a Member since 1918) presented the Club with a gavel of carved walnut, in which his Godman-Salvin Medal was placed, with a Siberian Cross given him by Seebohm.

THE BULLETIN

The purpose of the Club, as first published (in the Preface to Vol. I of the *Bulletin*) was to give members of the B.O.U. an opportunity of meeting more than the customary once a year. However, printing of an abstract of the proceedings as soon as possible after each Meeting was required by the Rules. The presence of the Editor of *Ibis* as well as the Editor of the *Bulletin ex officio* on the Committee showed the particular importance attached to the *Bulletin*. It would appear that publication of the *Bulletin* was a vital purpose in the foundation of the Club so that there might be a publication in which new forms or new names could be published speedily, obviating the danger of losing priority in nomenclature. Thus at the first regular Meeting, the report of which was published in the *Bulletin* less than a fortnight later, Bowdler Sharpe named 5 new species and 11 more were described by others present, with a total of 58 new species and 25 new or amended generic names in Vol. I. The *Bulletin* (except the notice of the next Meeting) was reprinted soon after in *Ibis* until No. XLVI of 30 June 1897 and then, with the exception also of the names of those present at each Meeting, up to No. LXXIII of 3 July 1900. Vols. II and IX, which did not contain reports of Meetings, were not reprinted in *Ibis*.

Vol. I of 10 numbers covered the first session, from October 1892 to June 1893, since when a volume has been published every session, in addition to which there have been 12 special volumes. The first special volume, consisting of the paper read at the inaugural Meeting, was Vol. II published in 1894. The cost of it (£25) was defrayed by a Mr. J. P. Gassiot, F.Z.S. "on Dr. Sclater's suggestion" and he was presented with Vols. I—III of the *Bulletin* in thanks. In April 1899 an "Alphabetical Index to the Genera" adopted in the Catalogue of Birds in the British Museum was issued as Vol. IX of the *Bulletin*. The 9 Migration Reports were published as separate

volumes of the *Bulletin*, that for spring 1905 in February 1906 being Vol. XVII, for spring 1906 being Vol. XX and then the even numbered Vols. up to Vol. XXXIV which was published in December 1914 carrying the Report for spring 1913 and autumn 1912 migrations. Vol. XVIII (1906) comprised the Index to the *Bulletin* Vols. I—XV (1892—1905) which cost £53 to produce (of which all except £9 had been recouped 6 years after). In 1920 the publishers still had 90 bound copies but none are now held. The Index to the *Bulletin* Vols. XVI—XXXIX (1906—1919) was published in 1920: for this the Minute Book records that the compiler was to be paid “36s. per volume, and as there were 14 volumes, this would amount to 25 guineas (£27 6s.)” — a somewhat curious calculation. In fact it proved a longer job and he was paid a round £30. The Index to the *Bulletin* Vols. XL—LI (1919—1931) was published in 1932 and a Scientific Index to the *Bulletin* 1950—1959 in 1963. The Indices published in 1920, 1932 and 1963 were not issued as part of any *Bulletin* volume. In 1947 a General Index to Vols. LII—LXIII (1931—1943) was prepared at a charge of £50 but, faced with an estimate of £250 for printing 300 copies, it was decided not to print it but to send it to Tring Museum.

At the first and second regular Meetings all descriptions of new forms were in Latin, but later in the first session the Hon. Walter Rothschild and Dr. E. Hartert sometimes used English, particularly for longer descriptions (cf. *Auk* Vol. I, 1884, in which 13 new forms are described in English, one in Latin) and Latin was in use up to Vol. XXIII (1908/09) and, on occasion, for at least another 30 years.

The *Bulletin* always began with the names of those present at Meetings and this custom continued until Vol. 71(4) when it was discontinued as an economy, but was brought back in 99(1), as it was found that names added materially to its reference value. In Vol. VI the Chairman's Address was for the first time reported *in extenso* in the *Bulletin* report of the Meeting at which it was given instead of being issued separately afterwards, the practice continuing as long as Chairmen have given an address. The preliminary pages in Vol. I contained a Preface, the Rules, List of Members and List of Authors to which was added a list of Committee members in Vol. III, a list of officers, past and present, appearing from Vol. XLIV (1923—24) and this continued normal practice until Vol. 68. Since then the Rules have only been in 3 times (last in Vol. 79) and the officers past and present up to Vol. 89 and in Vol. 95 (1975). The latter are included in the Index for Vol. 99 circulated with this issue. A list of changes in membership has replaced the List of Members but the B.O.U. has kindly shown Club Members in their 1979 List of Members.

The *Bulletin* was printed by Taylor & Francis and published by R. H. Porter until 1905, when H. F. Witherby arranged for Witherby & Co. to print it and to publish it free of charge. After Vols. XVI to XVIII he asked to be relieved of the printing, which reverted to Taylor & Francis up to Vol. 68, after which H. F. & G. Witherby (publishers since 1932) took over the printing. Then in 1953 Witherbys intimated that they would be unable to continue distributing the *Bulletin* and printing of it was transferred to Caxton & Holmesdale Press, where it is happily still printed, with the October 1953 number, and the Club ceased to employ a publisher.

The text, including scientific index, was (like the preliminary pages)

numbered in Roman numerals in the early volumes but in Arabic figures in Vol. IX and from Vol. XI onwards (the index has been in the preliminary pages from 1960). Up to 1947, *Bulletin* numbers and volumes were both numbered in Roman figures (to the irritation of those who now handle them).

A separate *Bulletin* was normally issued to report each Club Meeting up to 1972. Up to 1947 the numbers of the *Bulletin*, except for the 12 special volumes, were numbered in a continuous series, as have been Club Meetings, but by the time this system of pairing numbers ceased they had diverged by five, *Bulletin* No. CCCCLXXIV reporting the 469th Meeting. The discrepancy, which puzzles every historian and student in turn, arose as follows:—

Bulletin

No. II	Nov 1892. Meetings numbered from first regular meeting (which was the second meeting).
CLVII	Feb. 1910. January 1910 meeting cancelled, contained obituary of Bowdler Sharpe.
CXC	Oct 1913. Guide to Selbourne (prepared for Club visit to Selbourne).
CCLXXIII	Jan. 1923. Proceedings of 12th Oological dinner.
CCCVI, CCCVII	July 1926. A single issue given 2 serial numbers but reporting only the June 1926 Meeting, the Meeting on 12 May 1926 having been cancelled (General Strike).
CCCCXLVI	Mar 1943. No meeting because of wartime accommodation difficulties.
CCCCLI	Mar 1944. No meeting because of wartime accommodation difficulties.
CCCCLXXI	Apr 1947. Reported meetings 464 and 465 due to printing restrictions caused by fuel crisis.
CCCCLXXII	May 1947. Reported meetings 466 and 467.

The report of Meeting 466, which followed the B.O.U. Annual Meeting and dinner, is unusual: after mentioning the numbers attending it but with no list of names, it read, "No scientific business was transacted".

From 1947/48 until 1968 there were 9 numbers of the *Bulletin* each year with 2 exceptions. In 1948/49, Vol. 69 contained 12 issues and covered 16 months, so that from then the Club's year was the calendar year; Vol. 71 had only 8 numbers (which still causes some confusion). There were 6 numbers a year from 1969-1972 (Vols. 89 to 92), since when there have been four (but Vols. 92(3) and 92(4) were published in one as a double number). In 1950, Vol. 70(6) had to be reprinted owing to a transposition of pages and the corrected copy starts page 40 with *Cercomela sinuata*; Vol. 70(8) had also to be reprinted and the amended copy has the publication date 15 December 1950. In 1952, with Vol. 72, a cover was added, the familiar green paper one with an Ibis drawn by D. M. Henry. Vol. 71(1) and 72(8) contain a short history and interesting reminiscences of the Club by Sir Philip Manson-Bahr, Chairman.

The text of the *Bulletin* was 67 pages in Vol. 1 and in sessional volumes reached 171 by 1911/12, peaking at 267 in Vol. LIII (1932/3). In 1914 the Rules were changed so that the *Bulletin* might contain descriptions of new species, although not communicated at a Meeting. It was decided in 1919 that the Oological sub-section reports, up to 12 pages, could be printed in the *Bulletin* for 1 year and this arrangement was renewed in January 1921.

However following heated criticism by Earl Buxton at a R.S.P.B. meeting of large series of clutches exhibited at Oological Dinners and reported in the *Bulletin*, the Committee, who wished to limit the collecting of eggs of birds, where they were rare or collected in excessive numbers, felt in April 1922 that they could no longer publish in the *Bulletin* proceedings of the Oological Dinners over which they had no control nor responsibilities.

In 1905/6 the Club sold a set of the *Bulletin* (Vols. I - XV) to the Natural History Museum for £4 3s. and the next year a set to the Bodleian Library for £4 9s. with the Linnean Society buying Vols. I-XIII (not now held by them). The free list then included 14 eminent overseas ornithologists, but in June 1915 this was reduced to 9, including 2 in Germany (Reichenow and Schalow). Likewise the 5 Japanese Members in 1941 remained on the membership list until after 1945, although communication with them cannot have been possible.

The number of non-members subscribing to the *Bulletin* has increased from a few early in the century to 53 in 1950 and 146 in 1979, and work to increase the number of subscribers continues; the larger the circulation, the more pages a year it is possible to finance.

The *Bulletin* had a strong emphasis on descriptions of new forms and the status of known forms, although in the editorship of Dr. Low (1930-35 and 1940-45) a more narrative style can be seen. When Dr. J. G. Harrison became Editor in 1952 he had to set about inviting contributions from scientific ornithologists who did not attend Meetings, as the Committee was requiring larger numbers (whilst very careful over costs), so that the *Bulletin* covered, as well as taxonomics, plumage variants, functional anatomy, pathology and some field ornithology. The broadening of scope has continued and in 1978, of 39 main papers, 16 were on field observations and 14 on taxonomics. Editorship of the *Bulletin* has never been easy, because it has generally had to be published within about a fortnight of the Meeting covered; but this problem no longer remains since publication is quarterly and unrelated to Meetings.

As a measure of the standing of the Club and the *Bulletin*, of the 14 Presidents of International Ornithological Congresses this century, all but 2 have been Club Members or attended Meetings as guests and 9 have been authors in the *Bulletin*.

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